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 TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [CH](#) [VE](#) [AJ](#) [IR](#) [BO](#)
 SUBJECT: LUKASHENKO'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY: A METHOD TO THE
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of shielding them from significantly higher gas prices next year.

¶16. (C) Despite Belarus' perceived successes with the EU, most analysts agree that Lukashenko is fully aware that the United States is a much harder nut to crack. That said, the GOB seeks to at least keep the USG from taking measures to further constrain U.S.-Belarus trade -- e.g., securing the renewal of the Jackson-Vanik waiver and the removal of language referring to economic sanctions from the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act draft legislation -- without addressing humanrights concerns. Key members in Lukashenko's administration have stepped up their attempts to engage in a "subtative dialogue" to normalize bilateral relations but the GOB routinely qualifies that such a dialogue would be on the basis of "mutual respect" (ref G). MFA Counselor Rzhyskiy strongly suggested to Pol/Econ ChRef that the USG will have to accept that Belarus holds fundamentally different views on political issues, but noted such differences should not spill over into bilateral trade.

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¶17. (C) Yakovlevskiy and several other experts with whom we have spoken are convinced that Belarus is actively working to reinvigorate the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and set up Lukashenko as the eventual successor to Cuban leader Fidel Castro as the next "Papa" of the anti-West block. Zaiko noted that Lukashenko is the ideal anti-globalist leader -- he is young (51 years old), energetic, bold, and he sits at the helm of a growing, stable (for now) economy in the heart of Europe. In this respect, some analysts assert that Lukashenko's highly publicized relations with countries such as Venezuela and Iran are as much political as they are economic in nature. Pkzdynak agreed with this assessment but noted that Belarus' foreign policy is founded more on self-preservation than on ideological interests.

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¶18. (CR We agree with our contacts' assessments that Belarus' extremely tense relationship with Russia has prompted Lukashenko to strengthen political and economic ties with those countries prepared to tolerate contact with him. However, if Lukashenko again refuses to sell at least half of Beltransgaz and Russia follows through on its promise to significantly raise gas prices for Belarus next year, Lukashenko's ardent statist approach to domestic and foreign policy will not likely save the country from tough economic times. Belarus remains extremely dependent on Russian energy supplies and markets, and deeper relationships with energy-rich countries would only partially mitigate the effects of economic pressure from Russia in the medium to long term. Thus, despite their talk about the need for greater independence, Lukashenko's only escape from crisis in

the immediate future appaars to be the Kremlin's continued willingness to prop up the fragile economy.
Stewart